

TO: Members of the Education Committee
FROM: Shannon Marimón, Executive Director, ReadyCT
DATE: March 15, 2023
RE: **EDUCATION COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING ON**

- **H.B. 6879, AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER CERTIFICATION**
- **S.B. 1197, AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

Chairs McCrory and Currey, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, Vice Chairs Leeper and Winfield, and distinguished members of the Education Committee: I am grateful for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of both **H.B. 6879, AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER CERTIFICATION** and **S.B. 1197, AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**.

I. ReadyCT strongly supports H.B. 6879, AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER CERTIFICATION and encourages the committee to make this legislation a priority for the 2023 legislative session.

It has been over two decades since Connecticut's educator certification and preparation requirements have been comprehensively reworked. This means that candidates who want to become part of the educator workforce in Connecticut – a dire need for the state given current educator shortages – are operating under rules and regulations that have not been updated since before they were born.

Piecemeal changes have only further entangled rules and processes.

The result: a complex, daunting, and expensive web of educator certification requirements that have not kept up with what we know today is needed to be a professional educator who can effectively prepare students for the world that awaits them upon graduation.

Now is the time to solve these problems in ways that build a robust, diverse, and effective educator workforce and that support our school systems to efficiently welcome and onboard candidates just starting their careers, looking to make a career change, and/or relocating to Connecticut.

Establishing a Commission to Modernize the Educator Workforce is a strong step to address the issue, and as written the bill includes representation from key stakeholders. Additionally, the guiding principles set forth in Sec. 2(f) of the bill serve as strong orientation; however, ReadyCT recommends including three additional considerations:

- That the Commission proceed with an understanding that the goal is to fully repeal all existing teacher certification regulations and replace them with a set of user-friendly, plain language, easy-to-apply regulations so that hiring criteria can be easily sourced and district-level hiring personnel are empowered to make informed staffing decisions that best serve districts, schools, and students;
- That the Commission recognize Connecticut's shift to a skills-based economy, thereby emphasizing in its review the need to provide to skilled experts aligned with the state's high-growth/high-demand industries streamlined access into classrooms in ways that

provide skills-based instruction thereby helping students understand the range of opportunities available to them through credentialing opportunities, apprenticeships, and higher education; and

- In the spirit of transparency and in order to ensure the Commission work results in meaningful change while maintaining momentum and accountability throughout the process, we recommend that the Commission be required to report out to the Education Committee and/or General Assembly on a quarterly basis on (i) the Commission's progress to date; (ii) the extent to which the Commission is complying with the procedural and substantive criteria set forth in the act; and (iii) any obstacles that, if not addressed, may stand in the way of the Commission completing its work in accordance with the mandated timeline.

Note that this effort, if done openly and transparently, will help advance a related, and long-held, priority of this committee: minority teacher recruitment and retention. A thorough review of teacher certification regulations and educator preparation programming, inclusive of alternate routes to certification, can result in creating flexible onramps into the profession without compromising quality and standards.

In the case of each outcome set forth above, participating stakeholders must consider the state's priority of attracting, recruiting, supporting, and retaining diverse candidates to the educator profession. This is what educators need, and this is what every Connecticut student deserves.

A final thought on H.B. 6879: I want to make special mention of the importance of naming the Center for Public Research and Leadership (CPRL) at Columbia University as a member of the Commission. CPRL has experience in bringing about systems-level change in ways that transform school systems so that they can provide all students with exceptional learning experiences. As that relates to Connecticut, CPRL has been a lead convener of the Connecticut Innovation Cohort, a group of key education, policy, nonprofit, and workforce leaders working in tandem with school system leaders/practitioners to improve Connecticut's public school system over the last two years. Accordingly, CPRL is very familiar with the challenges facing the Connecticut educational landscape as well as strategies to address them. With CPRL's participation, then, the Commission will have the benefit of a neutral but well-informed party together with legal, policy, educational, and change management expertise – all key elements to the success of this much-needed effort.

II. ReadyCT supports S.B. 1197, AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

Overall, the objectives of S.B. 1197 look to better prepare students for postsecondary success while ensuring that work-based learning opportunities are high-quality and well-aligned to the state's high-growth, high-demand industries, including advanced manufacturing, aerospace, and healthcare.

ReadyCT supports that effort and urges the the committee to include in the final bill where and how existing efforts to achieve the objectives of S.B. 1197 can be included, e.g., regional sector partnerships, workforce investment boards, higher education, and K-12 educators, together with education/workforce nonprofits, community-based organizations, and businesses, have already begun working together to implement career readiness programs in areas across the state.

To better ensure equity and access, S.B. 1197 should look to discern which efforts are having impact and then expand upon those efforts. This would streamline implementation, avoid redundancies, and leverage best practices in a way that minimizes variation not just from region to

region but, quite frankly, from town to neighboring town. This is not said to subvert in any way local control; instead, the idea is to encourage an approach to a critical *statewide* workforce shortage from a *statewide* lens.

On that point, S.B. 1197 should provide for additional investment in P20WIN, the state's longitudinal data system, to determine where and how K-12 career preparation initiatives are having impact. When P20WIN becomes the robust data platform that it can be – keeping track of what the state's public high school graduates are doing (college? work? apprenticeship? credentialing program?) and where they are doing it – Connecticut will be equipped to strategically abandon programming and policies that do not work while amplifying those that do.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on these important bills.

About ReadyCT

ReadyCT advocates for education policies and practices that narrow achievement and opportunity gaps so all Connecticut students can access and succeed within a 21st-century education system and beyond. We do this by collaborating with educators, employers, and community members across the state. We are guided by the belief that schools must prepare all students to become thriving citizens and professionals, and we are committed to recruiting, preparing, and supporting educators to deliver on that promise. We consider how enacting one set of policies/actions makes realizing other policies/actions more possible and meaningful. Our priorities assume examples of positive growth and outcomes exist in some schools and districts, and that the state's role is to understand how certain schools and districts working with historically underserved students are closing gaps while others are not. We are attempting to study, learn from, optimize, and most importantly—scale—what's already been proven to have impact. Our recommendations focus on optimizing present resources rather than seeking new funding sources. ReadyCT undertakes strategic efforts that prepare every student to pursue whatever college, career, or credentialing opportunity they choose in order to reach their highest potential. ReadyCT is part of a strategic alliance with the CT Business & Industry Association (CBIA) and CONNSTEP.